

Today's News - Monday, January 5, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: We're b-a-a-c-k! And with lots of catching up to do. The old year ended and the new year begins with regrets and resolutions, diatribes and dissertations. Plus ça change plus c'est la même. Happy New Year!

- Russell takes issue with starchitects becoming "whipping boys and girls in anger about concentrated global wealth" being blamed "for sins shared by society. When we are ready to transform communities and lives, architects are ready to do that with boldness, innovation and sensitivity."
- Betsky begs to differ with Bingler and Pedersen's "How to Rebuild Architecture" in the NYT "that is so pointless and riddled with clichés as to beggar comprehension."
- Brussat, on the other hand, cheers Bingler and Pedersen on: they "do not seem to realize it, and would probably not admit it, but their essay" was more than "just a critique of modern architecture or a call for traditional architecture."
- Lest we forget Prince Charles's latest architectural/urban manifesto, Murphy says the "new set of rules for architectural practice might be his silliest intervention yet," and offers up "10 much better ones."
- Hopkirk talks to architects who "grudgingly accept Prince Charles's urban design manifesto": "He's got 10 good ingredients but it depends what you cook with them."
- Gorlin minces no words about what he thinks of the Chartres Cathedral makeover: "This is cultural vandalism of the lowest order. The present work is arrogant and brutal, not done with the humility and sensitivity that this greatest of sacred spaces demands" (with his own pix to prove it).
- Dunlop calls for "an international competition to find an innovative modern architect" to build a new library at the Glasgow School of Art - not a Mackintosh replica.
- Wainwright offers a thoughtful (and often amusing) list of New Year's resolutions for architects: "ditch the Lego, outlaw the 'facadeectomy' [and "poor doors"]. Defend the meaning of public space. More gardens and bridges ... but not a garden bridge."
- Glancey offers a glimpse of architectural highlights to keep an eye on in 2015.
- Bevan cheers London museums and cultural buildings getting makeovers in this era of "development on a scale not seen for more than a generation - but for all the many billions being spent almost nothing is being spent on arts premises."
- Hawthorne ponders trends in 2014, when "architecture spent the year puzzling over its own self-sufficiency, finding various ways to wonder if it is capable, for the first time in a long while, of standing on its own two feet - maybe we'll start seeing answers to that question" this year.
- Betsky proffers 2014's "10 lamentable moments and 10 reasons for hope in architecture."
- Capps lists the "11 worst buildings of 2014": the "dubious designs and blustering egos should be read as a plea for 2015: Leave Frank Gehry alone. It's time for a new punching bag."
- Moore minces no words about what he thinks of Viñoly's Walkie Talkie: it's "bloated, inelegant, thuggish" and "has no meaningful or enjoyable relationship to anything else, either at street level or on the skyline" (ouch!).
- Kamin has high hopes for Gang's 88-story Wanda Vista Tower in Chicago's "high-rise building boom that's mostly been a snooze. No bland glass box here" (even though the design "needs work").
- Kimmelman has high hopes for MASS Design Group's two new "simple, even handsome" clinics in Haiti that "could be models for other struggling countries that lack resources for high-end Western-style hospitals."
- Fitch and Kloberdanz explain the comeback of the suburbs: "the rebound undercuts the notion that affluent buyers have seen the LED light and given up on their McMansion dreams," but they're "evolving and becoming more, well, urban-like."
- Hopes are high for the 11th Street Bridge Park across DC's Anacostia River, but "if we end up building a bridge park and people who were part of the process can no longer afford to live here, we have failed."
- Call for entries (deadline looms!): DWR Champagne Chair Contest (one of our faves!).

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The Struggle for Architecture's Soul: Prominent architects have become whipping boys and girls in anger about concentrated global wealth...Unfortunately much of the celebrity-architect bashing not only trivializes what architects are capable of doing, but blames leaders in the field for sins shared by society...When we are ready to transform communities and lives, architects are ready to do that with boldness, innovation and sensitivity. By James S. Russell- JamesSRussell.net

The New York Times Versus Architecture: Steven Bingler and Martin C. Pedersen critique the profession in "How to Rebuild Architecture"...NYT has now for the second time in several months given its editorial page over to a piece on architecture that is so pointless and riddled with clichés as to beggar comprehension. By Aaron Betsky- Architect Magazine

Between the lines of the NYT ["How to Rebuild Architecture"]: Steven Bingler and Martin C. Pedersen...who called on architects to pay more attention to public taste, do not seem to realize it, and would probably not admit it, but their essay in the New York Times...was not just a critique of modern architecture or a call for traditional architecture. It was that at least, but so much more. By David Brussat- Architecture Here and There

Prince Charles's 10 principles for architecture – and 10 much better ones: He's infuriated architects for more than 30 years – but Prince Charles's new set of rules for architectural practice might be his silliest intervention yet...it's essentially a mix of the sensible, the tautological and the downright sinister. By Douglas Murphy- Guardian (UK)

Architects grudgingly accept Prince Charles's urban design manifesto: While many agreed with his manifesto they questioned the "position of untouchable power" from which he asserts his views...."He's got 10 good ingredients but it depends what you cook with them." By Elizabeth Hopkirk -- Robert Sakula/Ash Sakula; Tony Fretton Architects; Robin Nicholson/Cullinan Studio- Building (UK)

The Destruction of Chartres Cathedral: ...its interior is in mortal danger of dissolving into a pale, kitsch version of its former sublime self...This is cultural vandalism of the lowest order...The present work is arrogant and brutal, not done with the humility and sensitivity that this greatest of sacred spaces demands. It is a great dishonor to the cultural patrimony of France. By Alexander Gorlin- Huffington Post

Build a new library at Mackintosh Building, not a replica: Charles Rennie Mackintosh library...at the Glasgow School Of Art should not be rebuilt as a "replica" copy, a leading Scottish architect has declared...should instead open up an international competition to find an innovative modern architect who can build a new library. -- Alan Dunlop- The Herald (Scotland)

New year's resolutions for architects in 2015: Build better towers, ditch the Lego, outlaw the 'facadeectomy'...Ration your icons...Forget facets...there's really no excuse for specifying a "poor door"...Design dumb cities...Defend the meaning of public space...More gardens and bridges ... but not a garden bridge... By Oliver Wainwright -- Zaha Hadid; Norman Foster; Frank Gehry; BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Pelli Clarke Pelli- Guardian (UK)

Buildings to look out for in 2015: Jonathan Glancey picks a selection of exciting new architectural projects that are

planned for the coming year. -- Frank Gehry; Sweco Architects; SelgasCano; Caruso St John; Gillespie, Kidd & Coia (1966)/Avanti Architects; David Adjaye/The Freelon Group/Davis Brody Bond (Freelon Adjaye/SmithGroup) [images]- BBC

Olympicopolis and the London museums and cultural buildings getting a new look in 2015: ...museums, theatres and galleries are being redesigned or extended - but a city whose culture is vital to its global status needs more than a makeover...undergoing development on a scale not seen for more than a generation...but for all the many billions being spent almost nothing is being spent on arts premises. By Robert Bevan -- Wilkinson Eyre; David Chipperfield; Amanda Levete/AL_A; John Pawson; Herzog & de Meuron; Norman Foster; Niall McLaughlin Architects/Kim Wilkie; Thomas Heatherwick- Evening Standard (UK)

The future is in the past: Architecture trends in 2014: Architecture spent the year puzzling over its own self-sufficiency, finding various ways to wonder if it is capable, for the first time in a long while, of standing on its own two feet. Next year maybe we'll start seeing answers to that question. By Christopher Hawthorne -- Michael Maltzan; Rem Koolhaas; Smiljan Radic; Peter Zumthor; Kersten Geers; Bernard Rudofsky- Los Angeles Times

The Best and Worst Architectural Events of 2014: Aaron Betsky presents 10 lamentable moments and 10 reasons for hope in architecture. -- Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects; Diller Scofidio + Renfro; BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Zaha Hadid; Guggenheim Helsinki Design Competition; Peter Zumthor; Benthem Crouwel Architekten; Cruz y Ortiz Arquitectos; Frank Gehry; Ma Yansong/MAD Architects; etc.- Architect Magazine

The 11 Worst Buildings of 2014: ...list should be read as a plea for 2015: Leave Frank Gehry alone...It's time for a new punching bag. The dubious designs and blustering egos collected here all make a strong case for the worst architecture of 2014. By Kriston Capps -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro; BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Kengo Kuma; All 1,715 Designs in the Guggenheim Helsinki Contest; Thom Mayne/Morphosis; Zaha Hadid; Santiago Calatrava; Ma Yansong/MAD Architects; Urban Design Group; David Childs/Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)- Slate

Walkie Talkie - bloated, inelegant, thuggish: 20 Fenchurch Street: Despite grand claims to design excellence and public benefit, the 37-storey London skyscraper...has no meaningful or enjoyable relationship to anything else, either at street level or on the skyline. By Rowan Moore -- Rafael Viñoly- Observer (UK)

Jeanne Gang's Wanda Vista Tower Design Needs Work: ...planned 88-story, \$900 million hotel, condominium and retail tower...is the biggest and most ambitious thing going in a high-rise building boom that's mostly been a snooze. No bland glass box here...presents...a grand opportunity and a vexing challenge...Still, there's hope... By Blair Kamin -- Studio Gang Architects - Chicago Tribune

In Haiti, Battling Disease With Open-Air Clinics: Two new clinics for treating cholera and tuberculosis could be models for other struggling countries that lack resources for high-end Western-style hospitals...simple, even handsome...It's not clear yet how well the clinics will work. They open soon. If they turn out right, they could serve as relatively light-footed models... By Michael Kimmelman -- MASS Design Group [images]- New York Times

Big Houses And Sprawling Suburbs Are Back - And Better Than Ever: Talk of a suburban comeback is...at odds with a large anti-urban chorus...the rebound undercuts the notion that affluent buyers have seen the LED light and given up on their McMansion dreams...evolving and becoming more, well, urban-like. By Stephane Fitch and Kristin Kloberdanz -- Richard Florida; Joel Kotkin; SWA Group; Andres Duany; Wendell Cox- Forbes

Building a Park to Span a Divide in Washington, DC: On the edge of the historic Anacostia neighborhood here there is a very ugly bridge...plans to transform the 11th Street Bridge...into a park that would link some of the district's tourist-oriented neighborhoods with one of its final frontiers in the march toward gentrification..."If we end up building a bridge park and people who were part of the process can no longer afford to live here, we have failed"... -- OMA; Olin [images]- New York Times

Call for entries: DWR Champagne Chair Contest: create a miniature chair using only the foil, label, cage and cork from no more than two champagne bottles; deadline: January 12- Design Within Reach

Book Review: "Saint John's Abbey Church: Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space," by Victoria M. Young: A history of the making of a contemporary sacred architectural masterpiece transcends its subject and becomes a broadly applicable study of peerless client-architect communication. By Norman Weinstein [images]- ArchNewsNow

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